

WORKSHOP ON RESEARCH PRIORITIES IN  
PRIMARY EDUCATION

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# **INTRODUCTION**



## INTRODUCTION

Education is the key for national development and primary education finds an important place in the context of Education for All which has been a major thrust of all Governmental and Non-governmental organisations. The National Policy of Education, 1986 (as updated in 1992) and the Programme of Action, 1992 reaffirm the national commitment to Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE). It has been resolved to provide free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality to all children upto 14 years of age. In this context issues like education of the disadvantaged groups (SCs/STs, and girls), their enrolment and retention are to be tackled for achieving the goal of UEE.

The Government of India is making all out efforts through formal and Non-formal education to bring all children within the specified age group under the umbrella of education. Efforts through the projects like Primary Education Curriculum Renewal (PECR), and Comprehensive Access to Primary Education (CAPE) which were in the area of primary education and supported by the international agencies are of prime importance. In recent years with the cooperation of international agencies like the World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF, SIDA, ODA, etc. projects like Bihar Education Project, Area Intensive Education Project, Lok Jumbish, Shikshakarmi,





UP Basic Education Project, Andhra Pradesh Primary Education Project, etc. have been in the offing. Among all these initiatives, District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) is a new initiative.

The DPEP focusses on few carefully selected districts with a view to develop and implement a replicable, sustainable and cost-effective programme in order to :

1. reduce differences in enrolment, dropout and learning achievement among gender and social groups to less than five per cent.
2. reduce overall primary dropout rates for all students to less than 10 per cent.
3. raise achievement levels by at least 25 per cent over measured baseline levels and ensuring achievement of basic literacy and numeracy competencies and a minimum of 40 percent achievement levels in other competencies, by all primary school children.
4. provide, according to national norms, access for all children to primary schooling, wherever possible or its equivalent non-formal education.

The DPEP is a major initiative undertaken to effect improvement in UEE (i.e. access, enrolment, retention and learning achievement). The programme is distinguished by its holistic approach and the principle of contextuality in planning. It envisages a shift from macro to micro planning with the district as the unit of planning. The



programme lays emphasis on peoples participation and management, has a marked gender focus and seeks to enhance school effectiveness by increasing infrastructural facilities, developing instructional materials, and teachers' training. People's participation has been ensured through Village Education Committees (VECs).

In this context the role of research based interventions as an effective mechanism for bringing in systematic changes and eliciting alternate strategies for improving and sustaining primary education reforms is of great significance. Under DPEP continuous efforts are being made to involve innovations and alternate strategies for tackling educational issues through the process of research and development.

A close look at research in the area of primary education indicates that much is desired to be done in this area. This is evident from the fact that this area has been least explored and the quality of researches also need to be upgraded. A bibliography of research studies brought out by NCERT (Dave, P.N. and Murthy, C.G.V. 1994) reported the collection of around 1800 abstracts for the Fifth Survey of Educational Research. The numbers of Research Studies conducted in the area of primary education is 54, that amounts to around 3% of the total research conducted during 1988-92. In lines of number, specially this being a priority area in the



Indian Educational system, it looks quite small. Thus, there is no denying the fact that this priority sector of education has not received the attention that it should have, particularly when the country has not been able to achieve the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE).

To differentiate these studies it can be said that there are large studies with a much wider scope and there are small studies with a very limited scope. There are national studies and also the studies conducted at the regional or district or block level, covering much less ground and a far fewer number of subjects. The studies also differ in the degree of sophistication and quality.

NCERT through its constituents conducted 25 research studies under DPEP in the area of Primary Education. A broad classification of these studies shows that they related to different aspects of primary education, such as learning of mathematics, environmental study, teaching in multi-grade/large classroom size schools, various aspects of teacher training, and other areas.

During the period 1997-98 in all 14 research studies are in progress. A broad classification of these studies shows that they relate to different areas of primary education such as in-service training of teachers, learning of mathematics, teaching in multigrade schools, teacher motivation and teacher competencies etc.



In addition to the above mentioned Research Studies conducted by NCERT, International Seminars on problems and issues pertaining to primary education has been organised by NCERT since 1995 under the aegis of DPEP.

The first International Seminar was organised in July 1995 with a focus on **School Effectiveness and Learning Achievement at Primary Stage**. This seminar drew a overwhelming response from participants from within India and Abroad. As many as 31 presentations were made. A broad classification of these papers shows that they relate to different aspects of primary education such as classroom and school factors affecting learning achievement, methodological issues, factors affecting learning achievement of educationally disadvantaged population groups, issues related to teaching learning process, home and community related factors affecting learning achievement etc.

The second International Seminar held in July 1996 focussed on **School Effectiveness and Classroom Process at Primary Stage**. This seminar also received wide ranging contributions from scholars from within and outside India. As many as 65 presentations were made in the seminar. A broader classification of these papers covers areas like teacher empowerment, teacher burnout/stress, learning disabilities, issues related to teaching-learning process etc.





The third International Seminar held in July 1997 focussed on **Teacher Empowerment and School Effectiveness at Primary Stage**. About 50 papers were presented in the Seminar covering areas like school climate inter-personal relations, school community partnership, policy and management, motivational issues, case studies in teacher empowerment and school effectiveness.

These efforts, though important, are of limited nature and there is need attract more researchers to the area of primary education to make our interventions more realistic and meaningful. Thus, the Department of Educational Research and Policy Perspectives at the NCEERT organized a two-days workshop to identify research priorities in primary education. Prior to organizing the workshop, an approach paper was prepared and circulated among the participants. The specific objectives of the workshop were :

1. to deliberate and come out with some major concrete priority areas of research in primary education;
2. to develop guidelines for taking up research in primary education; and
3. to develop out designs of some significant research projects that may evolve responses to pressing educational challenges in primary education.

The details of the workshop are presented in the subsequent sections.



**PROCEEDINGS**



## PROCEEDINGS

### SESSION-I

The workshop began with a formal welcome of the participants by Prof. M.S. Khaparde, the Head DERPP who painted the scenario of school education from a historic perspective since the post-independence era. He pointed out the shortcomings existing in primary schools and raised issues concerning the primary education system. Some of these concerns included the poor enrolment, non-retentions, the large drop-out rate, multigrade schools, large classroom size, heterogeneous schools, disadvantaged populations, such as girls, SCs/STs, working children, rural and urban disparities etc. Taking cue from NPE which places UEE on the top priority, he observed that for achieving UEE several initiatives have been taken in India which are funded by the international organisations. He referred to UNICEF funded projects like PECP, DACEP, NHEES, CAPE, AIEP which were basically meant for educating the disadvantaged population groups and focussed on flexible problem-centered decentralised curricula. He observed that DPMP is yet another programme of Government of India listing out its objectives of implementing a replicable, sustainable and cost-effective programme at a district level. In DPMP continuous efforts are being made to carry out researches, to evolve innovations and develop alternate strategies for tackling educational problems to achieve UEE.



Dwelling on researches Prof. Khaparde focussed on identifying research gaps which need to serve as pointers for future researches. He also pleaded for development of research based curriculum, social learning focussing more on language spoken at home and used at schools. He pleaded for undertaking studies on how curriculum is perceived by disadvantaged population/groups? More studies need to be undertaken on Ashram Schools Residential Schools and there is a need to focus more on sensitive issues like gender specific studies. Talking about the methodology he emphasised on the need to have more ethnographic studies and use of qualitative methods related to primary education. He aptly insisted on inter-disciplinary researches and researches with inter-sectoral concerns. He did mention that NCERT under NDG attempted to do some work in this direction and said there is a need now to undertake studies inside and outside the NCERT on these directions. As regards the main objectives or agenda of the workshop he frankly admitted that it is an open agenda which needs to be evolved and it was expected from the Group that the priority areas of research in primary education need to be identified and their research related issues have to be spelt out as much as it can be so as to move ahead in getting the researches conducted. He did inform the House that while developing the Approach Paper efforts were made to consult documents such as the Research Survey Documents, Ed.CIL, DPSP Bureau MHRD Documents, which facilitated and prompted the enumeration of research areas that were presented in the Approach Paper. With these words he





once again welcomed all participants and requested Prof. Maheshwari, the Joint Director, NCERT to give the Chairman's Address.

Prof. A.N. Maheshwari, the Joint Director NCERT and the Chairman ERIC welcomed all the distinguished participants and addressed the gathering seeking professional help and directions. He began his observations by focussing on variety of decisions taken in the "Education For All" Summit held in India in 1993. A number of projects have been taken up after 1993 to strengthen the primary education in India. The constituents of NCERT i.e. RIEs were running B.Ed. programme for quite sometime. But recently they have been entrusted with the responsibility of conducting researches in Primary Education.

He observed that from the beginning we were expected to provide inputs to planners and under DPEP all action points were based on the research findings as research was an inbuilt component of DPEP programmes. The baseline Assessment Surveys became first in its series. 42 Districts were covered in 1993 and after three years of the implementation of DPEP a Mid-term Assessment Survey has also been undertaken. Under DPEP certain activities visualised and undertaken include, Development of Research Capacities, holding International Seminars under which three such Seminars have already been organised and the forth one is going to be held in July 1998 in Delhi. As a prelude to the fourth International Seminar, four Regional Seminars were planned and held to identify the best possible papers to be presented in the International Seminar. Apart from these, NCERT faculty was



also involved in undertaking researches of which 25 researches were completed in 1996-97 and about 15 are in hand.

The papers presented in the earlier three International Seminars were analysed and action points were derived from them. Yet there is a feeling that something is missing because these findings are not utilised at all. Any research will be an ad-hoc attempt if researches are not accepted/acceptable for the system. We still feel that the methodologies that are being used by the researchers need a fresh look. It is also true that a very few researchers have their focus around ground realities and it is needless to say that new initiatives are required. There are certain efforts concurrently which are working well. We need to look into these efforts and understand the efforts that underly the success of these initiatives. The success story of Balika Shiksha of Rajasthan meant for girls belonging to 11-14 years is worth mentioning. These Shiksha in a period of 4 to 6 months made them literate, imparted values, provided life skills and made them conscious about their health which would help them when they become mothers. Several camps were held so far where girls could ultimately read and write. If this is a success we need to understand the reasons for this success. Various questions have to be raised and suitable research methodology need to be evolved. He also expressed his concern to maintain periodic training so as to retain the continuity of the essence of the training programmes and to sustain the beneficiaries for effective transactions.



Concerns were also expressed regarding generation of research questions touching ground realities and need to probe into these issues. He felt that the innovative experiments being conducted in the area of primary education need to be extended to other parts of the country particularly the North-Eastern region of the country by associating the local youth in achieving the goal of UEE.

Emphasising the contextual nature of teaching-learning which is one of the component of DPEP, he opined that need based programmes need to be encouraged suiting the expectations of the community. He felt that there is a mis-match between the expectations of the community and the existing reality. He further wished that this mis-match be bridged. At present people have lost their interest and confidence in the state supported formal system of education and everywhere there is a rush for English Medium Education and this is true even in villages. This problem need to be addressed seriously. In this context, he narrated his experience of Haryana schools where he actually saw the kind of aspirations of people tending more towards Public Schools/English Medium Education although the Government Schools have qualified teachers and better infrastructural facilities.

The other concerns were also expressed related to the methodology of classroom observations to make the observation more appropriate, interpret data and use it for the system.

As regards the general trend of studies he was very clear in saying that they do not create any dent in school education



system. This needs to be studied. We need such studies which can create a dent in our school system, which can help the system to improve itself and in this context he sought the help of specialists assembled. While sharing the adequacies and competencies he was also very clear that the country like India has a lot of potentialities and wisdom. He narrated the luminaries in the area of Science and Technology who have contributed substantially for the growth of disciplines. If that is true in Science and Technology, can we think of identifying similar potentialities in the field of education and other allied disciplines? At the end he said that the present workshop was intended to seek for needed inputs to understand the primary school education system at the grass roots level so that purposeful and meaningful efforts can be made in understanding the situation and problems and having need based solutions to make school education programme a rewarding one. Toward this end he sought the cooperation and guidance of the participants.

## SESSION II

At the request of Prof. Maheshwar an eminent educationist Prof. M.S. Yadav accepted to chair the next session. The purpose of this session was to understand the concerns of the participants related to primary education and to list them out so that a pool of priority areas of primary education may emerge. Befitting the expectations from the session the Chairman shared his





observations and he highlighted the presence of two main inputs which are already available to the Group to continue the discussion and deliberations. They included, first, the Approach Paper prepared by the DERPP and secondly the presentations made by the Head, DERPP, and the observations of the Joint Director, NCERT and Chairman ERIC. While creating the perspective the Chairman did appreciate the concerns expressed in the Approach Paper which included the concern for the holistic approach, the R&D perspective in education, the need for the inter-disciplinary inter-sectoral approaches in understanding education as education does not stand isolated and is influenced by many sectors. Indeed education is a subset of social reality and social reality is engrossed by plurality of sections influencing each other. Appreciating the Approach Paper and the presentations by the Head, DERPP and the Joint Director, NCERT, he tried to focus on the need for identifying relevant researches which can enable the system to function better. With these opening remarks the discussion was thrown open to the participants. Some of the significant concerns that emerged in the discussion are mentioned below.

Prof. Menon in his opening remarks said that the present school education is being over centring on teacher, learner, curriculum, and teacher training. The child has no choice while parents decide the nature of course one has to opt. Therefore, all issues related to school education need to be seen and understood beyond a child. For example, if there is a drop-out, the



child alone is not to be blamed. The conditions of the child which made him drop-out need to be seen from different perspectives. The aspirations of the parents need to be understood too. The socio-economic and cultural environment needs to be understood. Success stories need to be studied in-depth. There was also emphasis on "individualised programme planning" suiting to the needs of the learners which alone can empower a child with required adequacy and competency. Providing autonomy to the school and the teacher also emerged in the discussion. The other significant issues raised by him included school structure, classroom environment and studying disabled groups focussing on success stories, understanding the facilitators of going/not going to school and to study the minimal infrastructural requirements to accept disabled students.

Putting forth the concerns and issues of primary education in totality, radical views were expressed by Prof. Passi in the light of certain harsh realities which exist as of today in the area of primary education. He was of the view that the school needs to be run on children's terms and not the vice-versa. In the context of plurality there is no justification for single structure, single pattern, single curriculum in our schools. A serious question was also posed whether education should be prescribed/imposed or it should be evolved and be dynamic. It was opined that important substantive issues are getting sidelined. A habitat where a very less number of school age children live lacks proper facilities for schooling. They remain diverse



from the access to the school. Should our planning not be the other way and efforts be made to provide all opportunities in such habitats. Concerns were also expressed about restricted admissions and understanding the constraints in such cases. While studying any education set up the child, the parent, the school, and the teacher are considered but the influence of certain externalities that are eliminated also need to be studied. It is often said that our teachers are unable to use their capacities to their full. This has implications for teacher motivation. It was also hypothesised that a scenario where schools owned by community, supported by Government and managed by teachers are better from the functional betterment view point as compared to scenario where schools are owned by Government and supported by community.

In the wake of the plural structure that exist in our society the concept of one structure of education was totally discarded and insisted on localised curriculum and contextualised teacher training programmes. Concerns were expressed that in the event of uniform structure and formal set up the creativity of child is curbed. It was also expressed that mere tinkering in education system does not bring in any desired result and it requires a fundamental paradigmatic shift in its focus and approach. Teachers need to be provided facilities which need to be used to their fullest extent. Teachers should also be help in undertaking activities related to research which can help them to help themselves in handling their everyday teaching-learning



situations.

The other delegate opined that the whole system of education covering formal and non-formal education systems indeed gearing towards UEE and empowering people with research techniques is an important concern. There is a need to undertake Case Studies of Success Stories and unearth the reasons for Success. While so doing the cost effectiveness component needs to be addressed too. To tackle the issues at the ground realities it is very important to drift away from the traditional type of researches meaning thereby the fundamental researches which are carried out at the University level. Qualitative researches are required and they must find place rather than the quantitative one in the case of DPEP and such similar situations. While undertaking researches in education there is a need to compare different systems operating. In the entire exercise there is a need to identify more specific areas and intensive research need to be undertaken. There is a need to undertake studies which have concern in inter-sectoral domains while studying issues related to primary education.

Throwing fresh light and perspective Prof. Y.P. Aggarwal shared his experiences as to how he came in contact with primary school teachers and authorities while teaching in JBT. He observed that many teachers think that certain sets of rural primary children are uneducable. Parents if they can afford send their children to adjoining Public School for better schools and as a result the children going in the neighbourhood school belong





mostly to the disadvantaged groups of children. Further, he opined that teachers are not accepting the responsibilities and there is need to study that. He called for introspection to see what is expected of a primary school teacher? Not all teachers need to make every school an elite school. Teacher has to be a teacher irrespective of the fact whether he belongs to rural or urban area but he must be fit enough to deliver goods as the system expects. Teachers belonging to urban areas also be fit enough to teach in rural areas. He also raised the issue of making existing schools more joyful and suggested to have appraisal of evaluation systems as it may have flaws. He also wondered if primary education could be privatised and pleaded for performance linked incentives and suggested to try out on an experimental basis.

From another perspective Prof. Ahluwalia emphasised on the importance of a teacher in a school system. He questioned the types of teachers that we have in our schools and pleaded for studying the teachers qualities and suggested to make it a part of the teacher training programmes. He pleaded for enriching the quality of elementary school trainers and for improving the competency of existing teachers and motivating them. He suggested to generate total quality movement. He was also very firm and did not hesitate to advocate punishing incompetency in teaching. To sum up, his main concerns were surrounded by the teacher and the teacher training issues.



Dwelling more on rural research Prof. Venkataiah raised concern as to how research can contribute to the improvement of research priorities coupled with matching methodologies. Senior researchers need to team-up with grass-root level functionaries in order to make research the reality-oriented. While commenting on the existing system he said it is not as bad as you may be thinking it about. What needs to be done is to identify compatible methodologies and strategies suiting the demands of the situation. We need to clear up the minds of our teachers regarding the instructional objectives. He raised a question as to whether we can work out certain strategies through researches which may be effective in improving the existing system under existing conditions. The concern was also raised to identify the Success Story of individual best teachers and even under adverse circumstances need to be disseminated as model for the benefit of larger teacher community.

As a true fundamental researcher following the University system of research Prof. Khajapeer confessed that University level studies are dominated by quantitative hypothetico-deductive type of researches which are of little value now. He opined that since research is a in-built component of DPEP, this component should receive greater importance. He noted that the students at the University level are theory oriented and lack applicability. He stressed for the polarization of both basic and application type of researches and pleaded for a happy blend of both. A noteworthy suggestion came by way of saying that even



applied research needs to originate from the basic research. Hence basic research can not be divorced from applied research. He pleaded for generating more innovative ideas and to study the issue related to demand pull - supply push in teacher education and said that demand oriented programmes for teachers need to be strengthened. Concern was also expressed to undertake phenomenological studies. Certain issues like joyful learning, developing local specific instructional material and testing its efficacy, gender preferences and education of the minorities were also discussed at length. A need to undertake Case Studies of innovative teachers was also expressed. As a person from Economics of Education he aptly pleaded for income elasticity and demand for education and its related areas. He also wanted certain comparative studies and studies focussing on cost effectiveness of certain programmes apart from manpower supply related studies. He insisted on inservice education of DPEP personnel in DPEP context.

Attempting to give a total picture of the DPEP position as of today Prof. Ved Prakash said that the DPEP is a four year old programme which has covered about 50 percent of students and 45 percent of the institutions and 40 percent of the teachers which has spreadover in 15 states in the country. He was quite optimistic in saying that lot of efforts have been made even before DPEP was launched and hence there is no need to be pessimistic about our school education programme in the country. He further emphasised that under pedagogical renewal process we should



replicate Success Stories and understand what is working at the grass root level. He was also concerned that not many studies have been undertaken on community mobilisation meaning thereby this needs to be taken as one of the priority areas. He was also concerned about adopting of decentralised curricula and certain issues like reaching to the unreachable in the community, retaining girls in the school system, and issues concerning equity. He was aptly opposed to the idea of replicating the studies with similar designs on different samples as the results of the studies differ or may differ as the target group differs.

Prof. Satvir Singh pleaded for understanding the system at the grassroots level. While discussing various issues under DPEP he stressed for a need to focus on a remote rural primary school child, understand the aspirations of parents, and understanding the total system of primary schooling. He focussed on the fading relationship between the teacher, pupil and the parents.<sup>f</sup> He raised a fundamental question as to why the present day teacher is not respected in contrast to what existed in the past. He pleaded for strengthening the supervision system in our school too.

Viewing the problems of primary education from the historic perspective Prof. Seshadri said firmly that the problems we are facing today existed since two decades and are not new to us. The research questions to be considered by the researchers must be grass-roots related and only such researches can enable us to address ourselves to the existing problems in a realistic per-





spectives. He appreciated the efforts to rope-in the University academics in the DPEP activities and working in University set-up must not handicap the professionals as problems of primary education are known to them. The elementary education research as an area of neglect by researchers far quite sometime. Sustaining his argument, he derived the source from the surveys of educational research it is evident that research in elementary education has composed a very small segment under the umbrella of researches in education. He raised certain issues and questions such as why children do not go to school? He stressed the need for taking up both basic and applied researches in the area of primary education. What is more crucial in educational research is to think of how education can be linked with human development? The kind of problems and issues that needs a quick answer and those issues which require a long term study need to be planned to cover short term, middle term and long term goals of education. The common essence of these studies essentially need to enable policy planners and influence policies and programmes. He also supported the idea of inter-sectoral studies, interdisciplinary studies and the importance of qualitative research in education. He was also pleading for contextualisation of education and said that this is a very big challenge before us. While talking about different approaches he also pleaded for unorthodox researches in education. The unique feature of DPEP studies as can be differentiated from other projects like CAPE, PEER etc is that the programme has taken off on the basis of



research activities such as baseline assessment study

At this particular juncture the Joint Director, NCERT aptly thought of clarifying certain positions to enable the participants to discuss further with a more clearer understanding of the position of DPEP status. He told the participants that a wealth of data has been generated through baseline assessment and mid term assessment studies of DPEP. He pointed out that the researchers can make use of this data to bring out meaningful studies. He questioned whether the existing data and the kind of analysis that are being made are fit enough to use as research based interventions to bring in any change in the system or plan for the future or something more needs to be done. For example, he mentioned about HLM analysis where an attempt was made to identify good and poor performance schools but the functioning of these schools have not been further probed into, the question remains to be answered as to why certain schools are good performing while others are poorly performing. He expressed his concern that any kind of data and analysis need to benefit the system for which is basically intended to. He also referred to certain efforts on deriving action points of the researches presented during International Seminars which have also been documented. They also need to be used for the benefit of the system. In this context he should his concern as to how to evolve strategies to use all this wealth of information for the benefit of the system.



Reacting to the presentations by individual delegates the Chairman Prof. M.S. Yadav expressed that there emerged two distinct views ranging from a total evolutionary view to modest approach with a relevance based education. While appreciating the concern for radical changes he was firm in saying that the existing system can not be dispensed with. While giving his observations on certain remarks made by the delegates he said that most of the educational researches are scanty (as highlighted in the Approach Paper) and we rarely see an inter-disciplinary approaches in these researches. Further he also insisted that the unit of study can not be classroom alone but a sub-systems of society need to be considered and from this angle calling for holistic researches got substantiated. In his assessment the Chairman opined that the district could be a unit of study and as it is a big geographic locale a team of researchers can collectively undertake research covering various dimensions of research. For example, to study the influence of village education committees, DEOs and other functionaries only one researcher may find it difficult and hence a team of researchers may approach such studies for a better understanding. He said that the problems do not exist only at the macro level but they also exist at the micro level. So he suggested to organise micro level researches related to classroom learners etc. The Chairman was amply clear in saying that the quantitative methods are indeed very useful but they are not devoid of limitations. Beyond a particular point it can not explain certain phenomenon. This



calls for employing alternative methods of research such as qualitative research. Hence he pleaded for maintaining both qualitative and quantitative researches. He cautioned that appropriate methodologies have to be identified and used in order to derive the maximum benefit from any research work. The Chairman with the above remark thanked all the delegates.

Assuming the Chairmanship of the next session Prof. C. Seshadri took cognizance of the issues and opinions of the participants regarding keeping the District as a unit and said that deciding the unit of observation as a district or block needs to be ideally decided after identifying the problems and hence the problem should decide the methodology and the methodology does not get decided earlier. Commenting on the qualitative and quantitative approaches of research he pleaded for adopting of triangulation of approaches/methodologies. Keeping in view the Approach Paper he pleaded for identifying inter-sectoral studies, inter-disciplinary studies and qualitative studies and set the agenda by saying that we need to identify priority area of research in primary education followed by the number of design and requested all the participants to identify altogether 15 to 20 specific problems.

### SESSION-III

On the second day of the Workshop, while apprising the deliberations of the previous day, Prof. Seshadri, requested the Director, NCERT, Prof. A.K. Sharma to share his views on research needs at primary level and his expectations from the present





Workshop. The Director, NCERT observed that the problems of primary education are not to be seen in the light of DPEP alone but it may be general in nature. In the context of UPE DPEP is one of the major initiative. He said that the prime concern is UPE which needs to be addressed seriously. It would be a misnomer to identify all the problems at one slot and find their solutions. The problems are many and as one goes on tackling one problem, others many emerge and thus the cycle would continue. He opined that the researches may be based on the Success Stories and he took the example of Balika Shibir which could improve the achievement level of girls. It was also wondered if some such similar innovations could be tried out elsewhere? If the programme like Balika Shibir in such a short duration can bring in so much of transformation one has to study their implications in depth.

He was quite clear that there are too many general concerns existing and talked about and what needs to be done urgently is to prioritise areas and address them. In this direction Ed.CIL had identified major areas of research and out of those if we can find out some most important areas, it will be worthwhile. He said that research interventions are not matching the grass-root realities. It is important for us to work out as to how quickly we can have studies and generate data for intervention purposes so that we do not lose time. The time frame of the functionaries involved can be worked out. He was down to earth when he said that academics and managers have different concerns



when they want to dwell on issues on Primary Education research and Managers of education need answers to the problems which they can implement. There is also a need to have proper documentation

He said that under DPEP, for the last few years, we have been searching for problem areas and even at this stage of phase II and Phase III of DPEP we still continue to do so. We have SCERTs at the state level and DIETs at the district level. The DIETs are not fully equipped with emarked academic faculty to perform desired functions though they are an important link between state and grassroot level workers. We need to examine as to why they are not effective and study as to how they can be made more effective. At the end he called for synthesising the concerns and to culminate the proceedings by way of identifying the core priority areas and make the programme a success.

Thanking Prof. Sharma for sharing of his concerns the Chairman Prof. Seshadri observed that two options have distinctly emerged from the discussion. First, we may take stock of what has been done in the area of primary education by undertaking systematic analysis and synthesising of what has been done in the past and the second option is to have a fresh thinking on issues and problems related to primary education. He felt that there are problems which need to be addressed on priority basis. Further readily useful research findings are needed for use in DPEP context but not those studies which will take a very long time. Time and again surveys of educational research have



informed us that the kind of researches that have been undertaken in primary education are not many and even among them they are not capable of influencing programmes, policies and planning. Now we need to prioritise areas and identify gaps. Our research needs be such which can answer our immediate questions, long term questions and medium term questions.

In response to the Chairman's call the members suggested various modalities and ultimately some chose to work in groups and some individually. However, before initiating the work some more inputs emerged for the consideration of the House. The total pool of these issues are as follows:

It was reminded that when the Group was talking of Success Stories, the local realities must be kept in view included. The changing social, economic scenarios and total situation need to be kept in mind while undertaking studies in primary education. It was also voiced that there is a need to prefer short and quick researches which have bearing on policy issues. The concern was also expressed to avoid duplication of research efforts. While identifying research areas the variables so chosen be such which are actionable. Those variables on which the researcher had hardly any control to change need not be focussed so much.

Reacting to various expressions a call was given to visualise researches with a compatible methodology which alone can fulfil the objective of DPEP. It was also said that the interventions have never been based on researches completely. May be sometimes they have been partly based on researches. When we say



that policy researches need to be undertaken it should be realised that academic input is also needed for that. We have a history of successful and unsuccessful programmes and some are still going on. We need to list what experience we went through and we need to have reflective approach. For example, the UP Basic Education Project and CAPE were sited as to how they could bring certain level of changes. It was further reiterated that the educational researches need to consider inter sectoral, inter-disciplinary and holistic approaches and make the research relevant. And while saying all this it was also alive in the mind of the speaker that the research can not reveal everything. The academics and managers in education differ in their research expectations. Concern was also expressed that the commissioned and non-commissioned research differ in their framework. An attempt was made to give a call to everyone to spell out what we want to do in the name of research in primary education and let us list those problems.

Taking a summative view of the presentations made, the Chairman reiterated the fact that the task before the Group was that of prioritising and farming out research problems. He also said at times policies are made out of researches too. Certain issues like what needs to be studied? How it needs to be studied? what questions are to be answered? and who should do it? are to be finalised. He suggested that three core areas presented in the Approach Paper covering learner and the learning processes; teacher and teaching processes; and curriculum and community





participation need to be looked in detail. Based on the directions provided by the Chairperson members started working on different priority areas individually as well as in Groups.

#### SESSION-IV

The research problems thus identified were presented individually and discussed. They were suitably modified, wherever necessary. After the presentation of all research problems the Chairman requested the Head, DERPP to carefully sort them out in different slots based on their substantive concerns and to analyse these in the light of all available research information in the area of primary education. To give a comprehensive coverage to priority areas in primary education, it was suggested to eliminate the lop sided load of studies on any one specific dimension and to supplement problem areas to fill these gaps.

For having shared the session so professionally the Chairman was thanked by the Head, DERPP and assured him that all possible care would be taken to reach a logical conclusion of achieving the objectives of the Workshop. The Head, DERPP also thanked all the participants who inspite of their busy schedule made it a point to attend to such an important Workshop and contributed for its success. The Workshop ended with a formal Vote of Thanks to the Chair.



**LIST OF RESEARCH PROBLEMS**



## LIST OF RESEARCH PROBLEMS

**AREA : LEARNERS AND THE LEARNING PROCESS**

**Problem : Identifying life Skills for Nurturance by Teachers Through Normal Classroom Transaction**

### **Research Questions**

The study may address to the following research questions:

1. What are various life skills specific to a cultural context?
2. How these life skills can be nurtured through normal classroom transaction?
3. What type of training teachers would require for undertaking such exercises?

### **Methodology**

1. Observation and interview for the identification of life skills.
2. Developing and trying out an orientation programme for teachers for the nurturance of such skills.

**Problem : Identification and Analysis of the Curricular Aspirations of Parents and Curricular Goals of Children, and Its Implication for Existing Curriculum**

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the curricular aspirations of parents regarding education of their children?
2. What are the curricular goals of children?



3. Are the curricular aspirations of parents compatible with the curricular goals of children?
4. What implications do they bear for restructuring the curriculum at the primary level?

#### **Methodology**

Survey using interview schedules.

**Problem : Identification of Factors Facilitating Education of Children with Disability in Regular Primary Schools**

#### **Research Questions**

1. What kind of children with disability (nature and severity) are admitted in the schools?
2. How long do children with disability continue in the school?
3. What are the factors which facilitate education of children with disability to complete primary school education in relation to (a) learner, (b) teacher, (c) curriculum, (d) school environment---organizational factors, and (e) others?
4. What are the factors that inhibit the child with disability to complete primary education?
5. What are the factors outside the school system which facilitate or inhibit the child with disability to complete primary education?

#### **Methodology**

1. Exploratory study for situational analysis involving interview and observation.





2. Retrospective study using TRACER method, i.e. identify 10-12 years old children in the community and obtain detailed information about them.

**Problem : Effect of Residential Placement of Children with Disability on Primary School Outcome.**

(Children with disability have difficulty in commuting on their own. Parents/family may not be able to afford transportation in terms of time and money, and thus decide to place such children in hostels meant for them)

#### **Research Questions**

1. Does provision of hostel facility positively affect school outcome such as completion of primary education, and learning achievement?
2. What are the additional costs of educating a child with disability in primary school by providing hostel facility?
3. In case hostel facility is not available what are the additional transportation costs required to educate a child with disability?

#### **Methodology**

Contrasting group design -- one group of children with disability studying in a school having residential facility and other group of children with disability studying in a school having only day care facility.



**Problem : Identification of Strategies for Promoting  
Special Education in Neighbourhood Primary  
Schools**

**Delineation of the Problem**

Keeping in view nature and severity of the disability three pronged approach may have to be adopted to promote inclusive education.

1. **Full integration :** Children with mild disabilities such as low vision, hard of hearing, amputations, limb deformities, slow learners, learning disability can be provided elementary education in the regular class-room by adopting innovative teaching methods as given at Appendix-1, para 9.1. to 9.9.
2. **Partial integration :** Children with disabilities who require remedial education have to be pulled out from the regular class for the subjects they have difficulty. A resource room has to be created and special instructions are given by Resource room teacher. Such facility can be provided obviously in large primary schools or few primary schools can be grouped in such a way that one resource teacher goes from one school to another offering resource room teaching to children with disabilities.
3. **Least Integration :** Children with disabilities who cannot benefit from full or partial integration methods, may be provided special school facility by locating a special class-room in the neighbourhood



regular school. Such arrangement is feasible only by having a trained special educator in the primary school.

### **Research Questions**

1. Is it possible to provide primary school education to children with disability of varying degrees in the regular school?
2. What is the effect of special teaching methods such as peer tutoring or buddy system on learning achievement of children with disability?
3. What preparatory work has to be done by the school at what cost to accomodate children with disability in the school?

### **Suggested Methodology**

Before and after design to measure learning achievement of children with disability placed in various settings.

### **9. Strategies for Promoting Special Education in Regular Schools**

**9.1 Remedial education/resource room teaching :** A child is pulled out from the regular class for the specific subject in which he/she is weak and requires extra inputs or special inputs. Such children are taught in the resource room by the resource room teacher using special methods with specific adaptations for learning. Such extra coaching or special coaching is advantageous but can have deleterious effect on the student being identified as the one in need of special or extra coaching.

**9.2 Student tutoring/peer tutoring:** It is used to describe a variety of situations where one student teaches another student, on one to one basis. A competent student is paired with one basis. A competent student is paired with one who has difficulty in a given academic



area. Tutoring may be cross-age in which older student gives instruction to younger student. Usually the tutor with average or above average ability teaches a student with equal or lower ability. This method must take into account (a) role of the tutor; (b) selection of the tutor; (c) training of the peer tutor; (d) specific needs of both tutor and the tutee, (e) time and effort required for actual tutoring - cost-effectiveness of the procedure and (f) supervision of peer tutoring arrangement.

**9.3 Ripple tutoring :** This arrangement include grouping of few handicapped students with the objective to tutor each other. For example, four students with learning disabilities are trained to tutor four students with behavioural handicaps. The LD students then train VH students to act as tutors. These "tutors" then begin to give instructions to 9 other students. The number of tutors can expand rapidly.

**9.4 Teaching aids :** Teaching aids may include parents, community volunteers or people with specialised skills who are paid or unpaid volunteers. Such classroom helpers augment the role of the teacher as well as relieve the teacher when a given child requires careful instruction and close supervision. Such teacher helpers are required to be trained before they are allowed to work with students.

**9.5 The buddy system :** Student.. with hearing handicaps may be assigned a "buddy" or "assistant". The buddy can take class notes and guide the student with limited hearing because the student with hearing impairment cannot do lip reading and take notes at the same time. For students with visual impairment the buddy can copy the material in large print or describe events that are happening in the class when required. The buddy can also help read the notes into a taperecorder for the student with visual impairment.

**9.6 Learning centre :** A learning centre is a reserved place in the classroom where students may go to work on an independent, guided learning activity. The learning centre provides (a) space to work, (d) equipment and material required, (c) instructions describing what to do and how to do, (d) a checklist for evaluating work, (e) answer sheets, (f) forms for recording performance and (g) a guide for correcting work. Learning centre can be used during the acquisition, maintenance and generalisation phases of instruction. The learning centre can also provide a teacher with an opportunity to give individualised instruction to a student with disability through repetition of instructions or by providing additional practice or by using the space for alternative assignment as classroom enrichment activity.





**9.7 Itinerant consultant:** Itinerant consultant travel from school to school assisting teachers in methods of assessment, instruction, material preparation and equipment building. Such consultant may also provide direct help to a student such as designing age remedial programme. The itinerant teacher may work with one student at a time or with small group of students.

**9.8 Cooperative learning :** It is an instructional arrangement in which small groups or teams of students work together to achieve team success in a manner that promotes student responsibility for their own learning as well as the learning of others. For example, four students can be placed in a group of whom one is high achiever, two are average achievers and one is low achiever. The studies have shown that it is not only the low achievers benefit from cooperative learning, but the high achiever also show significant gains. Occasionally, this method is also called circles of learning. There are several procedures in which groups can be formed, depending upon the objective to be achieved.

**9.9 Creative scheduling :** Classroom time-tables can be prepared in such a way to make it possible for teachers to provide occasional, individual or small group instruction to students having special needs. Two or more teachers can arrange to combine their students in some activities requiring little supervision. For example one teacher may take most of the students from the classroom while the other teacher may provide special instruction to the remaining students.

**Problem : Impact of Effective Schools on Social and Affective Domains of Children**

#### **Research Question**

1. What is the impact of effective schools/effective teachers on the social development of children?
2. Are the emotional bindings among children, between children and teachers, between children and parents different in effective schools?

What are the implications of these results for improving the primary education in the country

**Methodology : Observation and Interview**



**Problem: Examining the Cognitive and Language Development of Children Belonging to Disadvantaged Groups in various Socio-Cultural Contexts**

#### **Research Questions**

The Study would answer the following research questions :

1. What is the profile of cognitive and language development of children belonging to various disadvantaged groups?
2. Is there any variation in this profile due to variation in socio-cultural contexts?
3. What are the implications of this variation to curriculum designers and policy planners?

#### **Methodology**

- Use of situational tests and tasks

**Problem : Study of Learning Styles and Strategies of Primary School Children**

#### **Research Questions**

1. What are the major learning styles of primary school children?
2. Is there any difference in the learning styles of boys and girls?
3. Do learning styles vary due to variation in the socio-cultural context?

#### **Methodology**

- Use of appropriate tests
- Observation of learning styles actually used by children in the classroom



## **AREA : TEACHER AND TEACHING PROCESS**

**Problem : Developing and Field Testing a Programme to Orient School Functionaries in the Research Approach to Overcome School Based Teaching-Learning Problems**

### **Research Questions**

1. Can school functionaries effectively adopt action research approach to find solutions to the problems faced by them?
2. What are the different components of action research toward which these functionaries need to be trained?
3. Once trained, do these functionaries actually use this approach for finding solutions of the problem in future?

### **Methodology**

1. Training of Primary School level functionaries including teachers, headmasters, cluster level coordinators and DIET research faculty for undertaking action research.
2. Networking of the research experts to supervise primary school level functionaries and assess their difficulties

**Problem : Psyche of the Primary School Teacher : An Indepth Study**

### **Research Questions**

1. Psychologically, what makes a primary school teacher to work or not to work toward the fulfilment of aims/objectives?



2. What is the Psychological profile of a successful primary school teacher such as his motivation, self-confidence, ideology and so forth?
3. What are the deficiencies among unsuccessful teachers?

### **Methodology**

Psychometric and indepth studies using projective techniques, interviews, observation, and cross-validation through other sources.

**Problem : A Comparative Study of the Classroom Processes in DPEP and non-DPEP Schools**

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the classroom processes in terms of instruction, motivation, and interaction in DPEP schools?
2. What are the various coping styles followed by teachers and students in the schools?
3. How are the classroom processes in DPEP schools different from non-DPEP schools?
4. What are the implications of the results of the study for DPEP and non-DPEP schools?

### **Methodology**

Qualitative research methodology including case studies, interviews and observations.





**Problem : Stress in Teaching-Learning : A Study of Psychological Stress Experienced by Teachers, Children and Parents at Primary Levels**

**Research Questions**

1. What type of stress teachers experience in primary schools? What are the sources of these stresses?
2. What type of stress do the children, particularly from disadvantaged background, and their parents experience while learning in primary schools?
3. How these stresses could be removed?

**Methodology**

Survey with appropriate psychological tests coupled with interviews.

**Problem : Studying Large Classrooms and Multigrade Teaching Methodologies**

**Research Questions :**

1. What are the methodologies followed by primary school teachers in teaching multi-grade settings?
2. How do teachers manage instructions in large classrooms?
3. How can these strategies be used by other teachers while dealing with such situations?

**Methodology**

- Case study of teachers effectively handling multi-grade and large classroom settings.



**Problem : An Indepth Study of Elementary Teacher  
Education Programmes Offered by Various  
DPEP States**

**Research Questions**

The study would attempt to answer the following research questions :

1. What is the structure and duration of the teacher education programmes offered by various DPEP states?
2. Are these training programmes geared towards the objective of DPEP?
3. Do these training programmes develop practical skills among trainees about how to make teaching-learning child-centered and activity-based?
4. Do these training programmes use the locally available teaching-learning tasks in their programmes?

**Methodology : Survey Research**

**Problem : Study of Teachers' Implicit Mental Models of  
Children's Mind and Learning**

**Research Questions**

1. What do teachers think about children's make-up of the mind?
2. What are teachers' conceptions about children's learning?
3. What are its implications for teaching-learning in primary schools?
4. How can we bring changes in teachers' conceptions for better development of learners?



### Methodology

- Interview with teachers.
- Observation of teachers' behaviour in the classroom.

### AREA : CURRICULUM AND TEACHING AIDS

**Problem :** Developing a curriculum suited to local specific Situations in Classroom Teaching at Primary School Level.

### Research Questions

The study may address to the following questions :

1. What are the local specific materials that can be used for classroom teaching?
2. Can learning with the help of local specific material, be made interesting, enjoyable, and effective in terms of learning achievement?

### Methodology

1. Identification of local specific situations and materials.
2. Development of an appropriate curriculum with regard to use of these materials in teaching.
3. Working out a strategy to sensitize teachers to utilize local specific situations in classroom teaching.
4. Testing the efficacy of the developed material.

**Problem :** Study of Specific Changes Needed in Learning Materials for Children with Special Needs

### Research Questions

1. What components of the syllabus can be taught using regular methods and what components would require



adopted materials to facilitate learning amongst children with disability?

2. At what cost standard kit can be prepared for use with such children in primary schools?

#### **Methodology**

- Two or three schools offering different curricula may be involved

**Problem : Study of Curricular Changes, Required for Children with Disability in Elementary Education**

#### **Introduction**

The concept of "mainstreaming" advocates equal opportunities to be offered to children with disability, while "normalization" concept requires children with disability to be provided "least restricted" or barrier free environment.

Due to disability, changes in curriculum would be required, although it is desirable that as far as possible children with disability should be offered no concessions and should be exposed to same learning experiences as offered to their normal peers.

#### **Research Questions**

1. What changes in the curriculum are required in primary school classes?
2. What kind of children with disability be exempted from certain portions of the prescribed syllabus and what alternatives are suggested for additional instructions.





### Suggested Methodology

Syllabi of all class levels in elementary education has to be examined as it is actually practised in primary school, having admitted children with disability of various levels.

Based on actual case studies suggestions can be made for modification of curriculum.

NMH has developed an instrument on "Grade level Assessment" which can be used in individual case studies to ascertain whether children with disabilities have been able to develop competencies at the desired level.

### AREA : COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

**Problem :** Examining the Role of Village Education Committees in Effective School Management

#### Research Questions

The study may address to the following research questions :

1. What roles have been envisaged for VECs related to effective school management with special reference to regular attendance of teachers, increasing enrollment and reducing dropouts? To what extent VECs are performing their roles?
2. Can a suitable orientation programmes for non-performing VECs be developed?
3. What changes the orientation programme brings out in the role of VECs in effective school management?



## Methodology

1. Survey of the functions of VECs

Development and tryout an orientation programme

**Problem : Studying the Perception of Rural Parents towards Social Issues Like Education of their Children**

## Research Questions

1. What are the attitudes and values of rural parents toward education of their children?
2. What are the actual practices related to education followed by rural parents residing in difficult areas?
3. What are the causes responsible for discrepancies between actual awareness and practice towards education?
4. What are the appropriate strategies for inducing strong attitudinal and motivational changes for education?

**Methodology : Survey Research**

## **AREA : PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT**

**Research Problem : Examining the Effectiveness of DPEP Intervention at the District Level : A Case Study**

## Research Questions

The Study may answer the following research questions.

1. Is there any qualitative improvement in school atmosphere including access, enrolment, dropout, and teaching-learning processes as perceived by the teachers and students?



2. Is there improvement in the facilities (Physical and academic) in DPEP schools? :
3. What is the perception of community about the schools?
4. Is there effective participation of the community in school related programmes? If no, the reasons therefor.

#### **Methodology**

Case Study of few schools (about 10) covered under DPEP programme. The schools may be selected randomly.



# **ANNEXURES**





**WORKSHOP ON RESEARCH PRIORITIES IN  
PRIMARY EDUCATION**

*Venue : CIET Building, NCERT Campus*

*Date : 8-9 May 1998*

**Inauguration :**

Prof. A.N. Maheshwari  
Chairman(ERIC) and  
Joint Director, NCERT  
New Delhi 110016

**Address by :**

Prof. A.K. Sharma  
Director, NCERT  
New Delhi 110016

**Programme Director**

Prof. M.S. Khaparde  
Dean (C) & Head, DERPP  
NCERT, New Delhi 110016

**PARTICIPANTS**

1. Prof. M.S. Yadav  
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New Delhi 110030
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Director  
Nation : Institute of  
Mentally Handicapped  
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Secunderabad
3. Prof. Y.P. Aggarwal  
Department of Education  
Kurukshetra University  
Kurukshetra
4. Prof. N. Venkataiah  
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#### NCERT Faculty

#### RAPPORTEURS

- |   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| 1. Prof. M.B. Khaparde<br>Dean(C) & Head, DERPP | 1. Dr. I.K. Bansal     |
| 2. Prof. Ved Prakash<br>Head, DPEPCRG           | 2. Dr. A.K. Srivastava |
| 3. Prof. Satvir Singh<br>Member Secretary(ERIC) | 3. Dr. C.G.V. Murthy   |
| 4. Dr. I.K. Bansal<br>Reader, DPEPCRG           | 4. Dr. Bijender Singh  |
| 5. Dr. A.K. Srivastava<br>Reader, DERPP         |                        |
| 6. Dr. C.G.V. Murthy<br>Reader, DERPP           |                        |
| 7. Dr. Bijender Singh<br>Reader, DERPP          |                        |



Workshop on Research Priorities in  
Primary Education under DPEP

DAILY PROGRAMME

Dates: 6-9 May, 1998

Venue : Room. No.229  
CIET Building  
NCERT

8-5-1998

Session I

10.30 a.m. - 11.30 a.m. - Inaugural Session

- About the programme  
Prof. M.S. Khaparde  
Head, DERPP
- Chairman's Address  
Prof. A.N. Maheshwari  
Joint Director, NCERT

Session II

12.00 p.m. - 1.30 p.m. - Chairperson:  
Prof. M.S. Yadav

- Discussion on research  
priorities in primary  
education.

2.30 p.m. - 5.00 p.m. - Discussion continued

9-5-1998

Session III

10.30 a.m. - 1.30 p.m. - Chairperson:  
Prof. C. Beshadri  
Address by Prof. A.P. Sharma  
Director, NCERT

Identification of themes  
and research questions

- Curriculum related issues
- Learner related issues
- Teacher related issues
- Transaction of Curriculum  
Community Participation

Session IV

2.30 p.m. - 5.30 p.m. - Presentation and discussion  
on the Research Problems  
identified by the delegates

- Vote of thanks



**WORKSHOP ON RESEARCH PRIORITIES IN  
PRIMARY EDUCATION**

**(Approach Paper)**

**M.S. KHAPARDE  
A.K. SRIVASTAVA  
BIJENDER SINGH**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND POLICY PERSPECTIVES  
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING  
SRI AUROBINDO MARG, NEW DELHI 110016**

**1998**





## Research in Primary Education

Education is the key for national development and the primary education finds an important place in the context of Education For All which has been a major thrust of all Governmental and Non-Governmental organisations with a view to fulfil the constitutional obligations within stipulated period. The Directive Principle contained in Article 45 of the Constitution is related to elementary education which states that the State shall endeavour to provide within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years. With a view to achieve this objective in the post independence period the Government of India has taken several steps. The National Policy of Education (NPE) 1986 and up-dated in 1992 and a Programme of Action has placed Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) in top priority. The focus of UEE strategy rests on education for girls and children from disadvantaged groups. The essential features of the revised Programme of Action (1992) related to UEE are:

- An emphasis on retention and achievement rather than merely enrolment to overcome the problem of school drop-outs.



- The introduction of wide ranging, systematic non-Formal Education Programme as an integral component of the UEE strategy. The target groups for NFE include working children, girls and children from other disadvantaged or marginalised sections to whom NFE can offer flexibility in timing and pace of learning.
- The new perspective for planning class for a shift in focus from educationally backward states to educationally backward districts.

The challenges before the country in universalising elementary education are alarming. In this regard the strategies adopted are:

- disaggregated approach, with a focus on preparation of district specific, population specific plans for UEE within the broad strategy of micro planning through people's participation.
- Introduction of minimum levels of learning (MLLs) in schools to improve learners achievement. Micro planning provides the framework of universal access and universal participation while MLLs is the strategy for universal achievement.



Issues like education<sup>4</sup> of the disadvantaged population groups, drop outs, poor enrolment are to be tackled for achieving the goal of UEE. The Government of India is making all out efforts through Formal and Non-formal Education to bring all children within the specified age group under the umbrella of education. Efforts through the projects like Primary Education Curriculum Renewal (PECR), Comprehensive Access to Primary Education (CAPE) which were in the area of primary education and supported by the international agencies are of prime importance. In the recent past with the cooperation of international agencies like the World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF, SIDA, ODA, projects like Bihar Education Project, Area Intensive Education Project, Lok Jumbish, Shikshakarmi, UP Basic Education Project, Andhra Pradesh Primary Education project, DPEP etc. have been launched in India. In this endeavour the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) initiated since 1993 is being implemented on a larger scale with a new initiative for improving the quality of primary education and achieving the goal of UEE. The essential ingredients of the programme are emphasis on district level planning and implementation. It also lays emphasis on participatory planning and management.



Among the various strategies for improving the quality of primary education and bringing out Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE), the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) is a new initiative. The DPEP focusses on few carefully selected districts with a view to develop and implement a replicable, sustainable and cost-effective programme in order to:

- (i) reduce differences in enrolment, dropout and learning achievement among gender and social groups to less than five per cent.
- (ii) reduce overall primary dropout rates for all students to less than 10 per cent.
- (iii) raise average achievement levels by at least 25 per cent over measured baseline levels and ensuring achievement of basic literacy and numeracy competencies and a minimum of 40 per cent achievement levels in other competencies, by all primary school children.
- (iv) provide, according to national norms, access for all children to primary schooling, wherever possible or its equivalent non-formal education.

The DPEP is a major initiative undertaken to effect improvement in the quality UEE (i.e. access, enrolment, retention, and learning achievement). The programme is distinguished by its holistic approach and the principle of contextuality in planning. This, in effect, implies that





education is planned and organized in the specific context of the area concerned.....a shift from macro to micro planning with the district as the unit of planning. The programme lays great emphasis on people's participation and management, has a marked gender focus and seeks to enhance school effectiveness by increasing infrastructural facilities, developing instructional materials, and teachers' training. People's participation is ensured through Village Education Committees which are responsible for the enrolment and retention of children in schools and also they supervise the functioning of schools, check teachers' absenteeism and mobilize additional resources. Attempts have been made to ensure communities participation not only in the preparation of educational plans, but also in the administration of education including the mobilization of additional resources.

In this context the role of research based interventions as an effective mechanism for bringing in systematic changes and eliciting alternate strategies for improving and sustaining primary education reforms is of great significance. Under DPEP, continuous efforts are being made to evolve innovations and alternate strategies for tackling educational issues through the process of research and development. For instance, extensive baseline studies were conducted by every state included under DPEP resulting into research based information. This information



are suitably integrated and made use of during the district level planning process in identifying and developing strategies for effective intervention leaving a space for further evolving the concepts as well as processes by periodically updating research findings.

A close perusal of the researches in primary education in general as documented in various surveys of research in education may reveal that such researches are relatively scant, do not necessarily relate to the felt needs nor they are selected to find answers to grass-root level problems. Also, there has been a lack of interdisciplinary perspective in researches. It is to be realized that meaningful research in any area would require an interdisciplinary approach.

Many national and state level institutions viz. NCFRT, NIEPA, NIECD, ICSSR, Tribal Research Institutes, SCERTs and also some NGOs are engaged in Educational Research.

The National Council of Educational Research & Training (NCERT) through its constituents has conducted a number of studies, under DPEP which throw light on certain aspects of mathematics and language learning, multigrade contexts, competency based teaching etc.

The three International Seminars organised from 1995 to 1997 in the context of DPEP objectives with focus on school effectiveness, reflect researches being conducted in



India and abroad in the areas of concerns in Primary Education. The fourth International Seminar on Researches in Learning Organization, Community participation and School Effectiveness at Primary stage will be held in Delhi from July 15-17, 1998.

In the recent past Ed.CIL has come out with the documents on priority areas in Research in Primary Education.

#### **Multidisciplinary/Intersectoral Researches in Education**

As already stated there has been very few multi-disciplinary researches in Primary Education. It is stressed that meaningful research in any area requires an interdisciplinary approach. While each discipline has its own structure, the boundaries of various disciplines overlap and to achieve the holistic picture, it is imperative that the experts from the various disciplines work together to find solutions to the most pressing problems in School Education. Thus, the interface between various disciplines could be termed as interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary approach in research.

Education system is influenced by other systems such as social system, economic system, political system etc. and hence to achieve the desired holistic picture, it is imperative to study the education system in relation to other related systems.



Educational status influence the socio-economic condition of the people and on the other hand social, economic, cultural, political factors determine the nature of educational advancement in a country. Various operational aspects related to process and product of education are influenced by the various disciplines of social and behavioural sciences, such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, economics, management science and technology etc. For instance, basic research in curriculum would require the collaborative efforts of child development psychologists, educationists, linguistics, subject experts, anthropologists etc. The number of experts from different disciplines to be involved in interdisciplinary research would depend on the nature and scope of the research area.

Further, as stated earlier education is one of the sectors of the total system which influence or linked with overall national development. The other sectors are health, culture, technology, agriculture etc. As such for holistic development of education, it is but necessary to take up intersectoral projects involving at least two or more sectors.





### **Priority Areas for Research**

Under DPEP, the NCERT would sponsor action-oriented research studies with clear focus on CURRICULUM AND ITS TRANSACTION AT THE PRIMARY LEVEL. It has three interrelated goals :

- (a) Understanding the characteristics of learner and the learning process.
- (b) Understanding the primary teacher and the teaching process.
- (c) Analyzing various aspects of curriculum.

Also, studies of INTERDISCIPLINARY NATURE adopting QUALITATIVE APPROACH such as case studies, ethnographic analysis, etc will get priority. The details of the priority area are summarized in the following sections .

#### **(a) Learner and the Learning Process**

- Study of developmental characteristics (motor, cognitive, language, social-emotional, personality, attitudes and values) of learners from disadvantaged background (such as SC/ST, girls and rural) in different contexts
- Examination of the learning process employing experts and novices paradigm
- Identification of learning needs of children coming from diverse socio-cultural contexts
- Learning styles and strategies of boys and girls in different social contexts
- Identification of skills and competencies as well as problems of children with special needs



- Identification of specific difficulties experienced by children in learning language and mathematics and their remedies
- Studies on motivational and adjustment problems of children with special needs

**(b) Teacher and the Teaching Process**

- Conducting studies to make primary school teachers more resourceful so as to perform the role of facilitators. This would entail taking up studies on the personal characteristics (e.g., strength, motivation and competence of the teacher), the immediate context (e.g., the home and school environment, relationship with colleagues), and the broad social context (e.g., parental concerns and expectations, extent of traditionality/modernity, etc.) of the teacher
- Enabling teacher to understand the active role of the child in the learning context
- Studies on teacher's implicit mental models of children's mind and learning.
- Analysis of the curriculum components and duration of the teacher education programmes.
- Studies on the impact of various in-service teacher training programmes
- Analyzing large classrooms and multigrade teaching methodologies.
- Developing competencies in teachers for competency based teaching



- Enabling teachers to understand various social contexts to enable them to reorient their teaching strategies.
- Development of competencies among teachers to manage children with special needs.
- Development of remedial programmes to teach basic concepts - spatial, qualitative, and temporal.
- Designing of training programmes to develop research skills and motivation in teachers to find answers to specific problems.
- Role of Panchayati Raj institutions in teacher preparation, selection and ensuring teachers accountability.
- Developing in teachers an appreciation for the effects of school and social contexts on teaching-learning for making learning attractive and joyful.

**(c) Curriculum and Teaching Aids**

Analysis and examination of the steps required for making learning of subject matters meaningful, joyful, and child-centred for each grade level.

- Evaluation of the curriculum materials with regard to learning load and gender sensitivity
- Adaptation of the curriculum to the developmental characteristics of children in general and to the needs of the disadvantaged children (such as SC/ST, girls, rural) in particular
- Studies on the manner in which learning experiences of different socio-cultural groups is contextualized in schools. This would also consist of analyzing the transac-



tion of curriculum in different social contexts.

- Analysis of cognitive processes involved in learning various subject areas
- Exploring alternative ways of teaching language and mathematics at primary grade levels.
- Defining concept of readability in different subject areas and their incorporation into textbooks.
- Analysis of socialization pattern in different communities and schools and its implication for curriculum and teacher-training
- Development of remedial instructional materials for children with special needs and their testing.
- Adaptation of the curricula to the needs of the children with special needs.

#### **Emphasis on Employing Qualitative Approach to Research**

A large majority of studies have, so far, been quantitative in nature wherein questionnaire method has been used frequently for collecting the relevant information. While this approach yields valuable information, it fails to explain the underlying process involved in learning. Thus, any diagnostic step with the use of this approach is not possible. Therefore, attempts need to be made to extensively use qualitative methods (case studies, qualitative interviews, observation, and ethnographies) and action research approach in future studies. Also, as far as possible, studies should be of interdisciplinary nature





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# ABBREVIATIONS

AIEP	Area Intensive Education Project
CAPE	Comprehensive Access to Primary Education
DACEP	Development Activities in Community Education and Participation
DERPP	Department of Educational Research and Policy Perspectives
DPEP	District Primary Education Project
Ed.CTL	Educational Consultants India Limited
EFA	Education For All
ERIC	Educational Research & Innovations Committee
NCERT	National Council of Educational Research and Training
NDG	National Development Group
MHEES	Nutrition, Health Education and Environmental Sanitation
NPE	National Policy on Education
ODA	Overseas Development Bank
PECR	Primary Education Curriculum Renewal
R&D	Research and Development
RIE	Regional Institutes of Education
SCs&STs	Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
UEE	Universalisation of Elementary Education
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Childrens Fund
VEC	Village Education Committee